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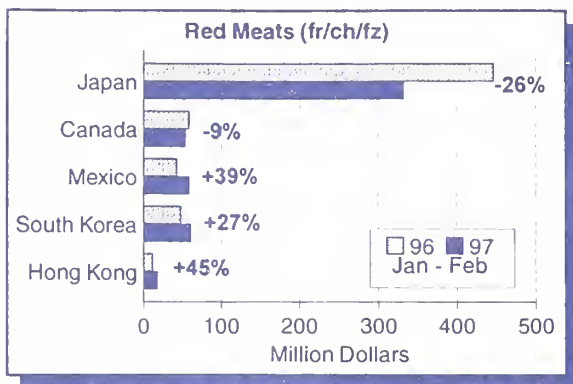
Foreign
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Service

Agricultural Trade Highlights

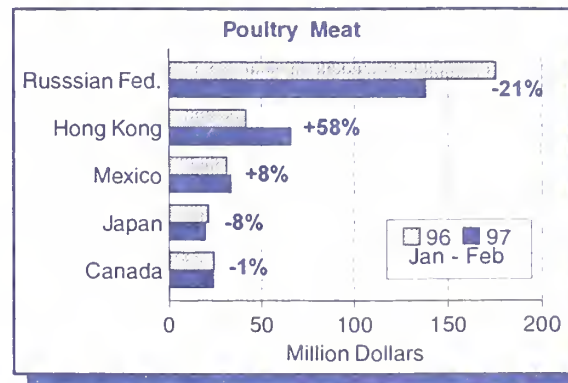
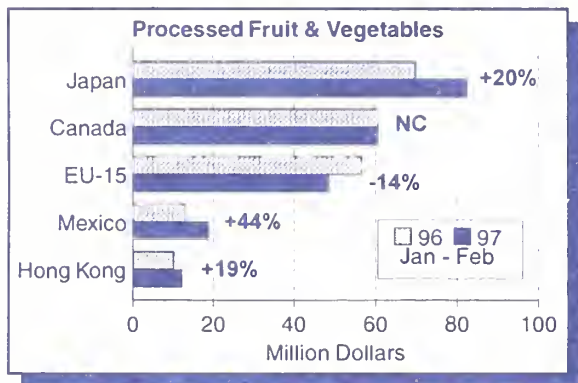
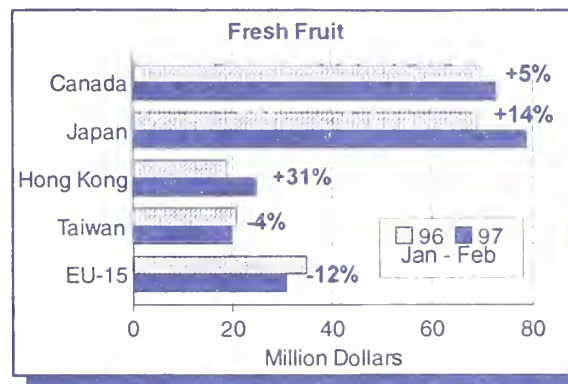
Circular Series

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April 1997

Consumer Food Trade Trends...



Top Five Markets



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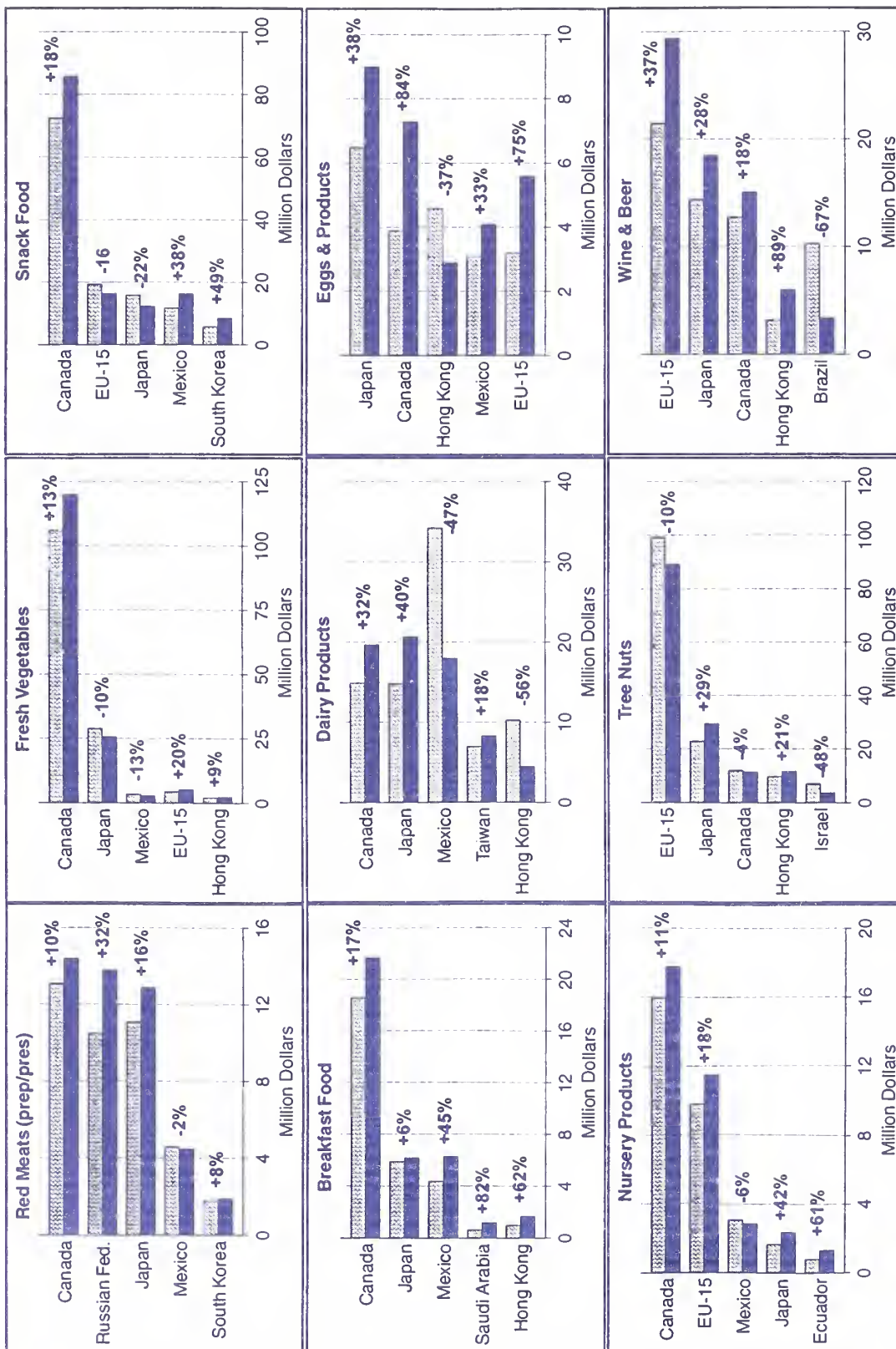
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Top Five Markets for Selected U.S. Consumer Foods

February Comparisons

CY 96 ■ CY 97



Note: Percentages are computed as the change from 1996 to 1997. Countries are ranked from highest to lowest based on CY 1996 exports.

Transportation Feature: Russian Far East

The Russian Far East is emerging from a region needing humanitarian assistance to a paying customer for a wide variety of imported consumer-food products. Geographic proximity offers significant market opportunities for U.S. suppliers to Russia's Pacific Coast as trans-continental transportation costs limit the competitiveness of traditional European suppliers. The following article is excerpted from a transportation report on the Russian Far East published by the Agricultural Marketing Service.

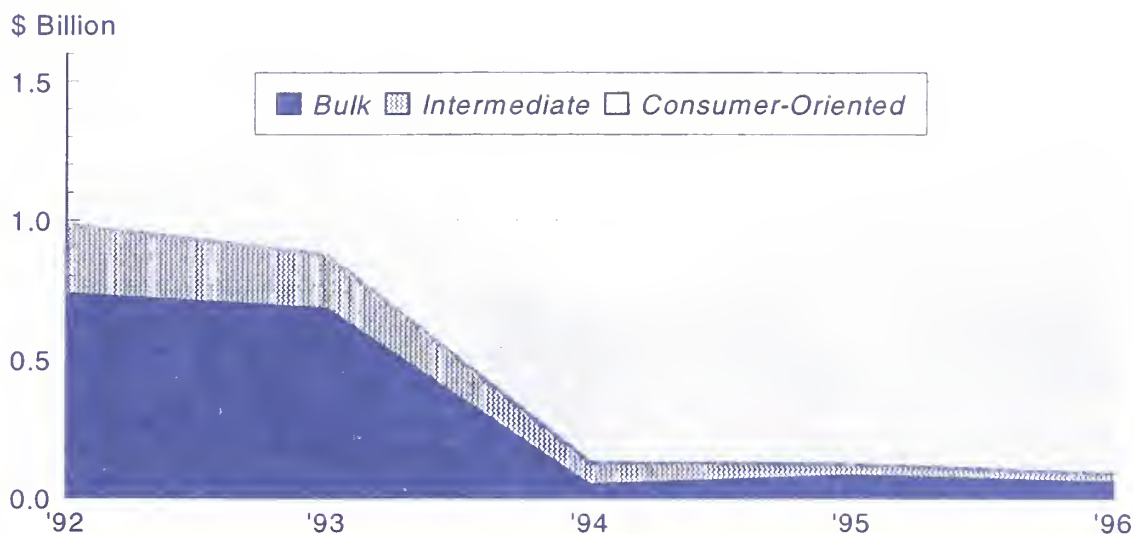
A decline in subsidized food deliveries out of western Russia and the tremendous cost of transportation from regions as far as 6,000 miles away, has led the Russian Far East to turn to its Pacific neighbors, including the United States, for higher quality and often less expensive food supplies. This region imports as much as 25 percent of Russia's total U.S. food purchases, estimated at over \$400 million in 1995, even though the Russian Far East comprises only 5 percent of the country's total population. A high concentration of sea ports with direct links to the Trans-Siberian Railway makes the Russian Far East an ideal transit point for accessing new markets in eastern Siberia and central Asia.

In 1995 the U.S. market share for food products in the Russian Far East was approximately 35 percent of all

imported foodstuffs, yet nationwide the U.S. share of Russia's imported food market was only about 10 percent of the total. Additionally, data from the Port Import Export Reporting Service (PIERS)--a database derived from manifests of oceangoing vessels leaving U.S. ports, which includes volume data--suggests that approximately one-fourth of all U.S. agricultural exports to Russia have been shipped to the Russian Far East in recent years.

Based on Russian Far East share of total volume, exports to this region highlight the remarkable changes that have occurred in the past four years. During the Soviet era, the Russian Far East relied heavily on western Russia to provide as much as 90 percent of its food needs, but the high cost and inefficiency of Russia's transportation system, without the luxury of

Exports to Russia Shift from Bulk Grains to Consumer Foods



Transportation Feature: Russian Far East

subsidization from Moscow, is now resulting in tremendous opportunities for U.S. agricultural exporters. Despite economic uncertainty and tight financing for Russia's food importers, the Russian Far East has proven itself to be a fast growing market for U.S. food products.

Changes in Russian Ag Sector Lead to Shift in Composition of Imports

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the nature of Russian-American agricultural trade has undergone a dramatic transformation. Agricultural exports to the Soviet Union between 1988 and 1991 averaged \$2.6 billion making the Soviet Union a top U.S. customer. Bulk agricultural products (wheat, soybeans, corn, and other coarse grains) along with significant exports of soybean meal comprised the largest portion of total exports averaging \$2.5 billion or 96 percent of total exports. After the collapse of the Soviet Union economy and the subsequent reform of the newly independent Russian Federation and other former Soviet Republics, U.S. exports to this region plummeted, dropping below \$1 billion by the end of 1994.

At the outset of reform, the liberalization of consumer food prices resulted in steep drops in meat and poultry consumption while reduced subsidies to meat producers simultaneously resulted in lower output and falling herd size. The subsequent lack of demand for animal feed and the shift in use of Russia's own grain to human consumption led to a sharp decrease in demand for imported grain. Inefficient meat production, higher production costs, and inconsistent availability of supply encouraged Russia's emerging entrepreneurial class to import meat products from abroad.

U.S. exports of consumer-oriented food products jumped from almost nothing prior to 1991 to more than \$909 million by the end of 1995, making Russia the fifth largest market for these products. In 1996 exports of consumer-oriented food products to Russia exceeded \$1.2 billion, a 36 percent increase over 1995 and driven mainly by the dramatic rise in poultry and meat exports.

Russian Opportunities for U.S. Agricultural Exports are in the Far East

Though politically part of the Russian Federation, the Russian Far East is increasingly bound economically to

Pacific Rim countries, Canada, and the United States. Transnational relationships between the U.S. West Coast and Russian Far East territories, cities, and ports have been established and trade is beginning to flourish. The potential market for U.S. food products is tremendous, and trade data suggests a high potential for continued export growth.

Analysis of U.S. food shipments to Russian ports (using the PIERS database) highlights trade flow patterns between the United States and the Russian Far East. In terms of overall volume based on total metric tons shipped, market share for the Russian Far East in 1996 was approximately 25 percent of U.S. exports to Russia.

The value of U.S. agricultural imports to the Russian Far East is estimated to be as high as \$500 million, a significant figure considering that the region's eight million people comprise only 5 percent of the total Russian population. These figures indicate that per capita consumption of U.S. food products is higher in the Russian Far East than in western Russia.

The Russian Far East is also a natural transit point for markets in eastern Siberia, doubling the potential Russian Pacific market to approximately 16 million people. However, most food distributors in eastern Siberian cities such as Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, and Ulan Ude receive the majority of their commodities from Moscow-based food importing companies, which are predominantly European products.

Moscow trading firms are generally more established than their Russian Far East counterparts and have on-going business relations with many Siberian firms. Many Moscow-based suppliers currently have preferential customs treatment offering them an advantage over newer, less politically connected firms in other Russian regions, enabling them to offer a number of products at prices lower than other food distributors receive through direct importing. For this reason, many eastern Siberian firms are satisfied with purchasing imported food products through large trading companies. In the future, these customs preferences will likely be eliminated, although no time frame can be estimated.

Despite the current reliance on Moscow food wholesalers, eastern Siberian markets may shift to firms in the Russian Far East in the future because these food importers have a transportation advantage over their

Transportation Feature: Russian Far East

Moscow-based competitors. Current rail rates for refrigerated rail sections run approximately \$180/metric ton from Vladivostok to Irkutsk and \$190 per metric ton to Krasnoyarsk. Rail shipments from St. Petersburg run more than \$200 per metric ton to these cities, giving distributors in the Russian Far East an advantage assuming customs duties are evenly assessed for all Russian importing firms. U.S. food exporters currently have a significant share of the Russian Far East market, and a shift away from Moscow by eastern Siberian food distributors would increase this share even more.

Variety Meats Popular in Russian Far East

U.S. exports of meat and poultry products have been significant since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The predominant market for meat, poultry, and various variety meats is Russia's western region, with strong demand in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Russian Far East has been a strong market for beef liver, sausages, and bologna, as well as chicken, beef, and pork hotdogs.

Based on share of total volume in 1995 and 1996, the Russian Far East market for variety meats is estimated at \$18.4 million and \$21 million respectively. Poultry exports continue to expand throughout Russia, and opportunities exist for growth in red meat exports, despite declining sales in the Russian Far East in 1996.

The Russian Far East purchased 25 percent of variety

meats and 48 percent of dairy products imported by Russia in 1996, but the share of total Russian containerized shipments arriving in Russian Far East ports was much higher, indicating the reliance on smaller shipments by Russian Far East food importers.

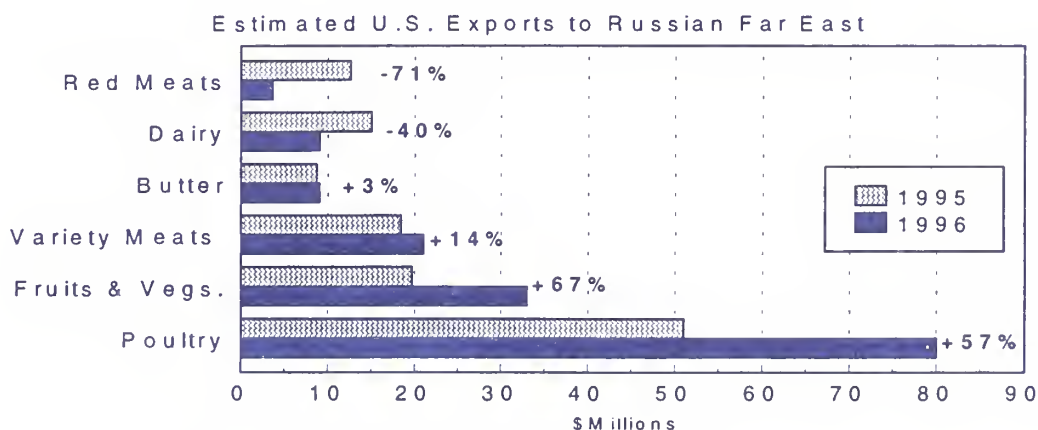
Russia's strong demand for frozen meat and poultry has meant shifting from higher-cost containerized shipments to refrigerated vessel in both western Russia and the Russian Far East over the past two years. Joint ventures with U.S. West Coast companies in refrigerated vessel services indicate a continually improving food distribution network, prospering importers, and confidence in the region's economy.

Pacific Coast is Destination for Majority of Fruit & Vegetable Shipments to Russia

Russia imported more than \$1 billion worth of fresh fruits and vegetables from the world in 1995. Although the U.S. share of the fresh vegetable market has only been about 1.6 percent of total imports and 2.4 percent of fresh fruit imports, Russia is now considered a top new growth market for U.S. horticultural products.

Though some shipments (on a volume basis) went to the larger markets of St. Petersburg and Moscow, 85 percent of fresh vegetables and 94 percent of fresh fruit exports were destined for the Russian Far East in 1996 (based on PIERS data). Insufficient production, coupled with the Russian Far East's proximity to the U.S. West

Poultry Dominates U.S. Exports to the Russian Far East

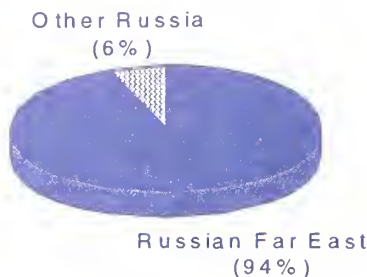


Estimates based on U.S. Bureau of Census trade data & volume data derived from PIERS.

Transportation Feature: Russian Far East

Exports to Russia are Destined for the Russian Far East

U.S. Fresh Fruit Exports



U.S. Fresh Vegetable Exports



Source: PIERs 1996
Share based on metric tons

Coast makes U.S. exports of perishable product more feasible and more price competitive in comparison to western Russia. The Agricultural Marketing Service has relaxed USDA grade requirements for the export of apples and pears through the Export Apple and Pear Act. The new grading rules apply only to Russia's Pacific ports.

In the horticultural category, apples, pears, and oranges have been the top sellers. Recently though, Florida grapefruit, kiwi, table grapes, and cherries have also been introduced into the market. In 1996, processed fruits and vegetable exports to Russia nearly doubled 1995 totals, growing from \$12.2 million to \$22 million.

Market Summary

In line with trends throughout Russia, the Russian Far East is a fast growing market for U.S. agricultural products. Demand for meat and poultry is expanding rapidly and Russia is now a growing market for consumer-oriented food products. Despite significant declines in the export of bulk and intermediate agricultural products after the breakup of the Soviet Union, U.S. exporters are beginning to show signs of recouping lost ground with a switch to high-value food products. Russia is once again a billion-dollar market for U.S. agricultural products, and the Russian Far East is a growing part of that market.

Export opportunities are available for producers of fresh produce and processed, canned, or frozen fruits and vegetables in the Russian Far East. Furthermore, exporters of U.S. variety meats, poultry, and low-end cuts of beef and pork should find significant potential in the Russian Far East and eastern Siberia in the future. Already U.S. food suppliers dominate the imported foods market for poultry and meat products, and in regions such as Petropavlovsk and Magadan, U.S. market share for all imported food products may well be more than 90 percent.

With the potential to expand the market from the coastal regions of the Russian Far East into eastern Siberia, along with the tremendous economic impact Sakhalin Island's off-shore oil fields, the Russian Far East will continue to expand for U.S. agricultural products.

Tom Rial is an international trade specialist with the Agricultural Marketing Service. For a copy of the entire report, "The Russian Far East: Assessing Containerized Shipments of U.S. High Valued Food Products," contact the author at (202)690-1320.

U.S. Agricultural Export Value by Region

Monthly and Annual Performance Indicators

	February			October-February			Fiscal Year		
	1996	1997		FY '96	FY '97		1996	1997(f)	
	-- \$Billion --		Chg	-- \$Billion --		Chg	-- \$Billion --		Chg
Western Europe	0.969	0.983	1%	4.817	4.811	-0%	9.275	9.3	0%
European Union 1/	0.939	0.957	2%	4.653	4.650	-0%	8.913	9.0	1%
Other Western Europe	0.030	0.026	-14%	0.164	0.161	-2%	0.363	0.3	-17%
Central & Eastern Europe	0.034	0.024	-31%	0.188	0.193	3%	0.399	0.4	0%
Former Soviet Union	0.217	0.120	-45%	0.766	0.769	0%	1.650	1.9	15%
Russian Federation	0.153	0.096	-37%	0.562	0.600	7%	1.235	1.5	21%
Asia	2.185	2.129	-3%	11.468	11.191	-2%	25.959	24.3	-6%
Japan	0.987	0.921	-7%	4.975	4.708	-5%	11.873	11.4	-4%
China	0.267	0.162	-39%	0.988	1.081	9%	1.816	2.0	10%
Other East Asia	0.564	0.662	17%	3.365	3.523	5%	8.165	7.5	-8%
Taiwan	0.181	0.210	16%	1.171	1.171	0%	2.924	2.6	-11%
South Korea	0.289	0.313	8%	1.543	1.687	9%	3.710	3.3	-11%
Hong Kong	0.094	0.139	47%	0.651	0.664	2%	1.531	1.6	5%
Other Asia	0.367	0.384	5%	2.140	1.880	-12%	4.104	3.4	-17%
Pakistan	0.032	0.024	-27%	0.249	0.175	-30%	0.394	0.3	-24%
Philippines	0.066	0.064	-2%	0.387	0.356	-8%	0.904	0.7	-23%
Middle East	0.279	0.247	-12%	1.166	1.054	-10%	2.537	2.1	-17%
Israel	0.065	0.074	13%	0.266	0.259	-3%	0.626	0.5	-20%
Saudi Arabia	0.036	0.055	55%	0.249	0.239	-4%	0.579	0.5	-14%
Africa	0.292	0.117	-60%	1.411	0.848	-40%	2.952	2.1	-29%
North Africa	0.208	0.073	-65%	1.003	0.521	-48%	2.071	1.4	-32%
Egypt	0.159	0.038	-76%	0.675	0.333	-51%	1.418	1.0	-29%
Algeria	0.024	0.012	-49%	0.160	0.101	-37%	0.313	0.3	-4%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.085	0.045	-47%	0.407	0.326	-20%	0.881	0.7	-21%
Latin America	0.815	0.760	-7%	3.924	4.279	9%	9.920	9.8	-1%
Mexico	0.405	0.361	-11%	1.841	2.116	15%	5.005	5.5	10%
Other Latin America	0.411	0.399	-3%	2.083	2.162	4%	4.915	4.3	-13%
Brazil	0.044	0.026	-40%	0.248	0.234	-5%	0.577	0.5	-13%
Venezuela	0.036	0.053	46%	0.160	0.226	41%	0.446	0.4	-10%
Canada	0.457	0.508	11%	2.382	2.635	11%	5.988	6.2	4%
Oceania	0.037	0.033	-13%	0.194	0.205	6%	0.476	0.4	-16%
World Total	5.286	4.919	-7%	26.607	26.266	-1%	59.795	56.5	-6%

Note: 1/ EU-15 includes the newest member states of Austria, Finland and Sweden.

FY 1997 forecasts (f) are based on USDA's "Outlook for U.S. Agricultural Exports," published February 24, 1997.

U.S. Exports of Agricultural, Fish & Forest Products by Major Group

Monthly and Annual Performance Indicators

Export Values	February			October-February			Fiscal Year		
	1996	1997		FY '96	FY '97		1996	1997(f)	
	-- \$Billion --		Chg	-- \$Billion --		Chg	-- \$Billion --		Chg
Grains and Feeds 1/	1.700	1.283	-25%	9.010	7.570	-16%	21.553	16.2	-25%
Wheat & Flour	0.539	0.277	-49%	2.820	1.696	-40%	7.032	3.6	-49%
Rice	0.117	0.100	-15%	0.470	0.503	7%	1.004	1.0	-0%
Coarse Grains 2/	0.701	0.559	-20%	3.949	3.564	-10%	9.338	7.3	-22%
Corn	0.637	0.500	-21%	3.502	3.187	-9%	8.369	6.4	-24%
Feeds & Fodders	0.220	0.221	0%	1.118	1.132	1%	2.627	2.7	3%
Oilseeds and Products	0.990	1.246	26%	4.823	6.357	32%	9.670	10.7	11%
Soybeans	0.640	0.821	28%	3.237	4.417	36%	6.312	7.1	12%
Soybean Cakes & Meals	0.162	0.219	35%	0.545	0.901	65%	1.305	1.5	15%
Soybean Oil	0.026	0.059	121%	0.181	0.266	47%	0.272	0.5	84%
Other Vegetable Oils	0.085	0.060	-29%	0.424	0.316	-25%	0.836	N/A	NA
Livestock Products	0.638	0.606	-5%	3.399	3.092	-9%	8.067	8.5	5%
Beef, Pork & Variety Meats	0.350	0.307	-12%	1.807	1.529	-15%	4.343	4.7	8%
Hides, Skins & Furs	0.124	0.158	27%	0.645	0.711	10%	1.677	1.6	-5%
Poultry Products	0.238	0.231	-3%	1.147	1.257	10%	2.730	3.0	10%
Poultry Meat	0.209	0.198	-5%	0.995	1.090	10%	2.353	N/A	NA
Dairy Products	0.060	0.063	6%	0.305	0.288	-5%	0.719	0.7	-3%
Unmanufactured Tobacco	0.163	0.146	-10%	0.701	0.704	1%	1.393	1.4	1%
Cotton and Linters	0.525	0.281	-47%	2.007	1.229	-39%	3.028	2.6	-14%
Planting Seeds	0.079	0.111	41%	0.398	0.514	29%	0.727	0.8	10%
Horticultural Products	0.760	0.808	6%	4.080	4.414	8%	10.019	10.5	5%
Sugar & Tropical Products	0.134	0.145	8%	0.739	0.839	14%	1.886	2.1	11%
Forest Products 4/	0.569	0.637	12%	2.866	3.154	10%	7.060	N/A	N/A
Fish and Seafood Products 4/	0.251	0.273	9%	0.996	1.063	7%	2.867	N/A	N/A
Total Agriculture	5.286	4.919	-7%	26.607	26.265	-1%	59.792	56.5	-6%
Total Ag., Fish & Forest	6.106	5.829	-5%	30.469	30.482	0%	69.720	N/A	N/A

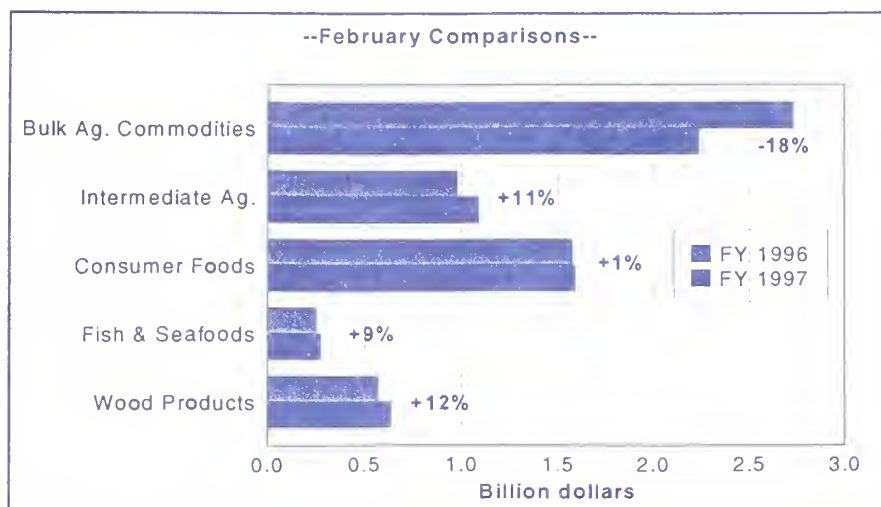
Export Volumes	---- MMT----			---- MMT----			---- MMT----		
			Chg			Chg			Chg
Grains and Feeds 1/	8.668	7.371	-15%	49.555	42.824	-14%	110.130	N/A	NA
Wheat	2.491	1.550	-38%	13.853	9.201	-34%	33.716	20.5	-39%
Wheat Flour	0.047	0.037	-21%	0.194	0.207	7%	0.470	0.6	28%
Rice	0.312	0.262	-16%	1.299	1.288	-1%	2.831	2.4	-15%
Coarse Grains 2/	4.552	4.363	-4%	27.624	25.903	-6%	58.656	55.0	-6%
Corn	4.144	3.887	-6%	24.637	23.094	-6%	52.681	48.5	-8%
Feeds & Fodders	1.056	0.969	-8%	5.504	5.216	-5%	12.065	12.4	3%
Oilseeds and Products	3.210	4.005	25%	16.062	20.696	29%	30.759	33.6	9%
Soybeans	2.256	2.868	27%	12.018	15.821	32%	22.372	24.4	9%
Soybean Cakes & Meals	0.666	0.809	21%	2.451	3.342	36%	5.445	6.0	10%
Soybean Oil	0.044	0.108	147%	0.298	0.484	63%	0.450	0.8	78%
Other Vegetable Oils	0.126	0.088	-30%	0.589	0.474	-19%	1.146	N/A	NA
Livestock Products 3/	0.310	0.238	-23%	1.547	1.251	-19%	3.791	N/A	NA
Beef, Pork & Variety Meats	0.113	0.105	-7%	0.572	0.527	-8%	1.410	1.5	6%
Poultry Products 3/	0.216	0.212	-2%	1.005	1.071	7%	2.383	N/A	NA
Poultry Meat	0.213	0.206	-3%	0.985	1.044	6%	2.330	2.7	16%
Dairy Products 3/	0.039	0.035	-10%	0.220	0.152	-31%	0.445	N/A	NA
Unmanufactured Tobacco	0.025	0.264	934%	0.108	0.353	228%	0.218	N/A	NA
Cotton & Linters	0.286	0.164	-43%	1.114	0.713	-36%	1.703	1.5	-12%
Planting Seeds	0.068	0.123	80%	0.298	0.637	113%	0.665	N/A	NA
Horticultural Products 3/	0.563	0.584	4%	2.961	3.012	2%	7.139	7.5	5%
Sugar & Tropical Products 3/	0.081	0.075	-7%	0.450	0.494	10%	1.137	N/A	NA
Total Agriculture 3/	13.467	13.070	-3%	73.321	71.204	-3%	158.371	145.4	-8%

Notes: 1/ Includes pulses, corn gluten feed and meal; 2/ includes corn, oats, barley, rye and sorghum; 3/ includes only those items measured in metric tons; 4/ items not included in agricultural product totals. N/A = not available.

FY 1997 forecasts (f) are based on USDA's "Outlook for Agricultural Exports," published February 24, 1997.

Monthly U.S. Agricultural Trade Summary: February 1997

Agricultural, Fish & Forest Product Exports Drop 5 Percent in February



U.S. agricultural exports totaled \$4.9 billion in February. This figure is virtually unchanged from the previous month, and 7 percent below the February 1996 level. As expected, bulk exports turned in a weaker performance due to reduced grain and cotton exports, and consumer food export growth remained weak largely due to reduced red meat shipments. Intermediate product exports were up largely due to gains for soybean oil and meal.

U.S. fish and forest product exports rose in February. *Forest product exports* rose 12 percent to \$637 million supported by gains in lumber shipments. *Fish and seafood exports* rose 9 percent to \$273 million due to broad-based growth in several product groups.

During the first five months of fiscal 1997, agricultural export value remained virtually unchanged from the same period last year. The current fiscal 1997 forecast of \$56.5 billion reflects a 6-percent year-over-year decline. As observed in the past few months, the declining value of grain and cotton exports will continue to bring year-to-date exports and the forecast into closer alignment. Fish and forest product exports are off to a good start during the first five months, running 7 and 10 percent ahead of last year's pace.

At \$2.2 billion in February, U.S. exports of *bulk commodities* were down 18 percent (\$493 million) from February

1996 levels. Large declines for wheat, corn, and cotton exports more than offset a large gain for soybeans. Bulk commodity exports totaled \$12.4 billion during the first five months of fiscal 1997, down 8 percent (\$1.1 billion) from the same period last year. Soybean exports were up 36 percent over year-ago levels to \$4.4 billion due to higher export volume and prices. Wheat and coarse grain exports were down 41 and 10 percent to \$1.6 billion and \$3.6 billion, respectively. At \$1.2 billion, cotton exports were down 39 percent.

At \$1.1 billion in February, U.S. exports of *intermediate products* were up 11 percent (\$110 million) from February 1996 levels. Export gains for soybean meal, soybean oil, hides and skins, and planting seeds more than offset declines for vegetable oils (other than soybean oil) and animal fats. Intermediate product exports reached \$5.3 billion during the first five months of fiscal 1997, up 11 percent from the same period last year. Rising soybean product exports to China, other Asian PacRim countries, and the EU-15 account for most of the increase in the entire category. Rising exports of planting seeds are also making a major contribution to overall growth for the entire category.

U.S. exports of *consumer-oriented products* totaled \$1.6 billion in February, virtually unchanged from the February 1996 sales level. Modest gains

for 10 product groups were offset by losses for chilled and frozen red meats, tree nuts, juices, poultry meat, and breakfast foods. February marked the ninth month of unusually slow red meat exports, largely due to reduced beef sales to Japan. Consumer food exports reached \$8.5 billion during the first five months of fiscal 1997, up only 3 percent from the same period last year. Reduced chilled and frozen red meat shipments continued as the major factor behind slower sales for the entire category. Poultry meat exports, on the other hand, have recorded the largest increase, up 10 percent (\$101 million) so far this year.

At \$273 million in February, U.S. *fish and seafood exports* rose 9 percent (\$22 million) from February 1996 levels. Gains were broad-based with fish roe and urchin recording the largest increase. Fish and seafood exports totaled \$1.1 billion during the first five months of fiscal 1997, up 7 percent from the same period last year. Rising surimi, crab meat, and assorted groundfish exports have more than offset declines for salmon, both whole and canned.

At \$637 million in February, U.S. *forest product exports* were up 12 percent (\$68 million) from February 1996 levels. Gains for lumber and panel products more than offset a decline in log exports. Forest product exports totaled \$3.2 billion during the first five months of fiscal 1997, up 10 percent from the same period last year. Export sales for the four major product groups were up, with lumber accounting for 60 percent of the overall increase for the entire category.

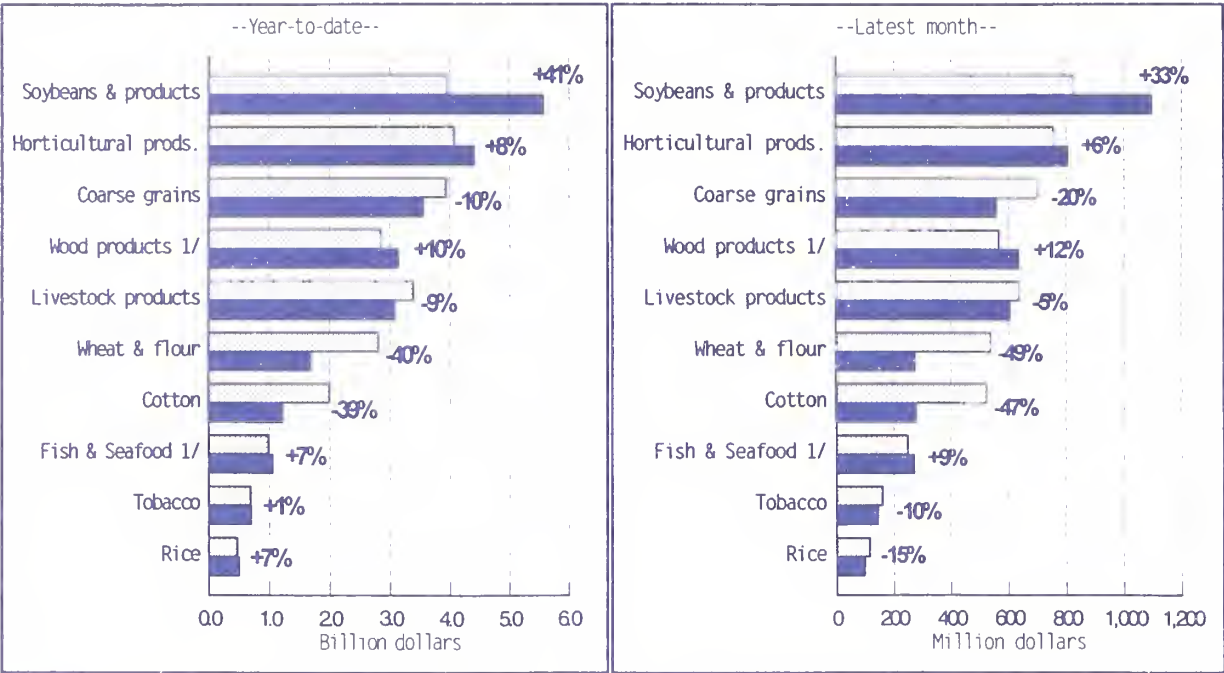
U.S. agricultural exports fell to 5 of the top ten markets in February. U.S. exports fell to Russia, Japan, China, Egypt, and Mexico, while exports rose to the EU-15, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Canada. Exports to the Russian Federation were 37 percent (\$57 million) below February 1996 levels, largely due to slower poultry meat sales. However, cum-to-date poultry meat exports to Russia are still running 9 percent above last year's pace.

U.S. Agricultural, Fish, and Wood Export Summaries

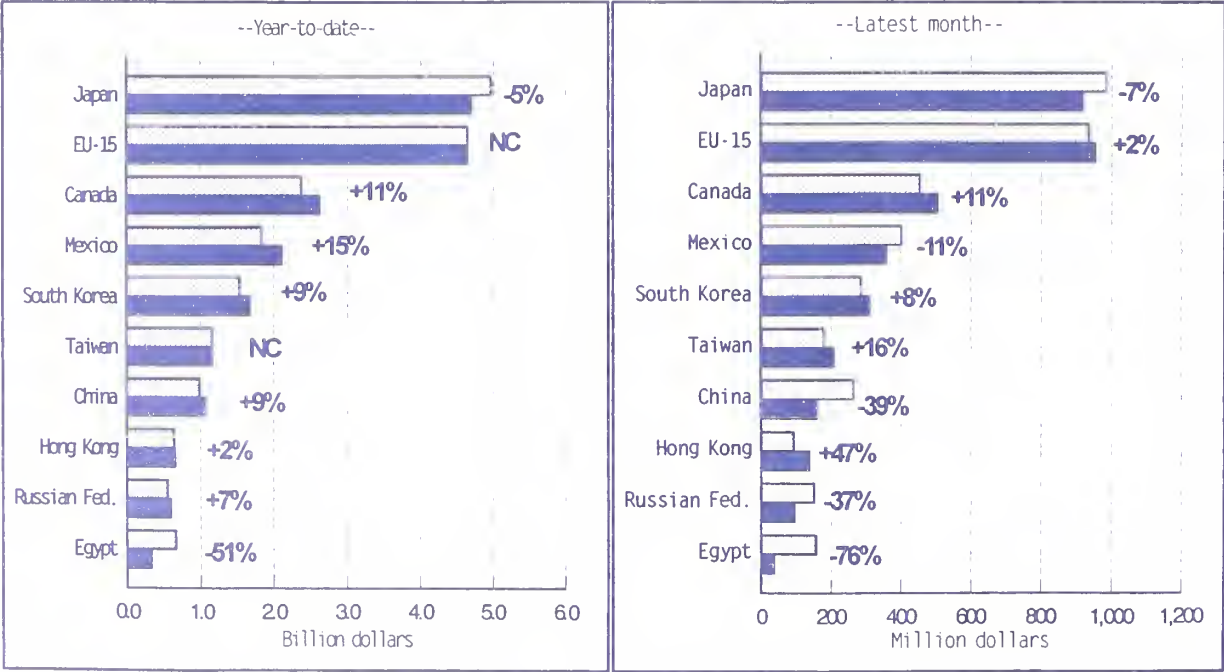
October-February and Latest Month Comparisons

FY 96 FY 97

Product Summary



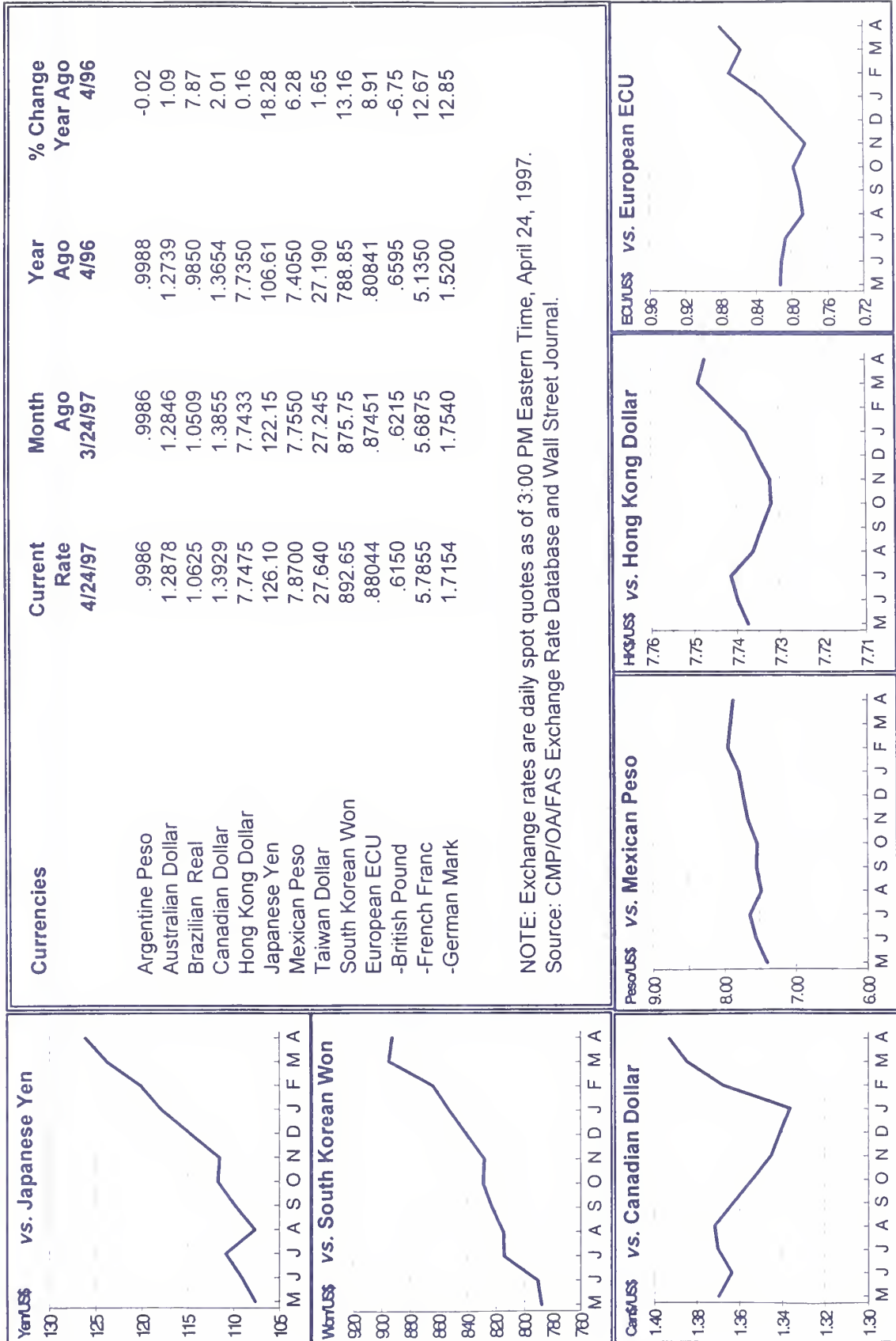
Top Ten Markets Summary



Note: Percentages are computed as the change from a year ago.
 1/ Not included in agricultural totals.

Value Of U.S. Dollar Against Major World Currencies

Daily Spot Quotations & Monthly Averages



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